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ABSTRACT

Canvassed was the priority or importance assigned to each of 44 competency statements by 33 Minnesota coordinators of special needs, those individuals at the local school level who are responsible for services to handicapped and/or disadvantaged students in vocational education. Incumbent coordinators were asked to assign each statement one of four possible ratings: not needed, useful, important, or essential. A summary of the competency ratings showed that the job is not clearly defined or not uniform, or both; but that the job does seem to entail a certain amount of educational leadership, both technological and administrative, as well as a certain amount of direct service. (Appended is a document summarizing the study.) (SBH)

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COMPETENCY RATINGS:

COORDINATORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS IN MINNESOTA

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May, 1976

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COMPETENCY RATINGS:

COORDINATORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS IN MINNESOTA

This report canvasses the priority or importance assigned to each of 44 competency statements by Coordinators of Special Needs program in vocational education in Minnesota. The ratings were carried out as part of a larger research and development program conducted by the Department of Educational Administration, University of Minnesota and supported in part by the United States Office of Education, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped under terms of a grant entitled Empirical Role Definitions of Local Special Needs Personnel in Vocational Education.

Another report, entitled Coordinators of Special Needs Programs: Forty-Four Competencies (Weatherman & Krantz, 1976b), describes how the competency statements were generated.[1] The competencies were generated by a jury of experts in special needs programming and related fields and were posed as competencies that might reasonably be expected of at least some Coordinators of Special Needs. The list of competencies, as generated by this jury, was explicitly not intended as a description of competencies that would be universally or uniformly required. Rather, the purpose of the list was to generate a series of likely statements that would then enable the job incumbents to describe the extent to which each competency was required in their respective Coordinator positions.

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[1] Other reports relating to this project and similarly dated May, 1976 include: Competencies Required of Coordinators of Special Needs in Vocational Education in Minnesota as Perceived by Incumbents (Summary); Position Description: Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota; Recommendations: Competency-Based Inservice Training for Coordinators of Special Needs in Vocational Education.

Coordinator of Special Needs

The persons who carried out the ratings described in this report were the Minnesota Coordinators of Special Needs in vocational education. The population consisted of all those persons who, at the level of local educational agency, carried responsibility for the program of services to vocational education students who were disadvantaged and/or handicapped.

At the onset of the study, the project's advisory committee discussed at some length the implications of referring to these people as educational administrators. As a general consensus, the committee believed that referring to them as administrators would be both inaccurate and impolitic. As will be seen in the self reports of competency requirements, this consensus may require modification.

Identification of Minnesota Coordinators of Special Needs is established in the state Plan for Vocational Education (Minnesota Division of Vocational-Technical Education, 1975). The Coordinator duties as described in the Plan include: preparation and implementation of a delivery system of services to students with special needs; provision of necessary support services; coordination and facilitation of inservice training regarding special needs for regular staff; consultative services to any vocational centers in the service area regarding special needs; and annual report to the state regarding progress of the local special needs program.

Included in the population of those carrying out the ratings were a number of individuals whose duties included direct service. This was usually the case in smaller vocational education programs or in the initial stages of a program's development. Others in the population had no direct service responsibility, devoting all of their time to program supervision. A few had supervisory responsibility for other individuals who themselves were

responsible for subprograms, i.e., for an evaluation center within a special needs program or for a remedial instruction center.

Two individuals were excluded from the study; they appeared to carry responsibilities virtually identical with those of Coordinators of Special Needs except that their administrative responsibility lay within special education rather than vocational education.

The final roster of Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota was determined on the basis of a list provided by the Special Needs Unit in the state Division of Vocational-Technical Education. Two consultations were held with the state Special Needs Coordinator to refine the list in accordance with the definition given above. The final list consisted of 33 individuals at the time this study began.

Instrumentation

The competency ratings were conducted immediately following a description by the incumbents of their positions. Their self reports of their positions and backgrounds are summarized elsewhere (Krantz & Weatherman, 1976b).

Competency Rating Form

In order to discover the relative importance of competencies actually required in the field, a rating form was prepared from 44 competency statements which had been generated by an expert jury. The process of generating those statements is described in a related report (Weatherman & Krantz, 1976b). The content of the finally developed list of competencies will be found in the entabled results given later in this report.

The rationale of directly asking the incumbents to rate the competencies was based upon several premises. First, since the job of the coordinator was newly emergent, it was not yet established on a consistent and detailed

statewide basis. No central information source existed which could speak for the experiences encountered by the position incumbents. Second, the position circumstances appeared to be diverse, so that an external statement would not be likely to reflect the job demands encountered by individual Coordinators. Finally, the Coordinators were considered to be the persons most directly in touch with the job realities in their own circumstances, and best informed about the competency requirements.

Priorities of Competencies

To explore the empirical question of which competencies are seen to be most important under particular local circumstances, the 44 competency statements were presented to the incumbents with each statement to be assigned one of four possible ratings: Not Needed, Useful, Important, and Essential. The rating options were defined as follows:

> Not Needed is one of two absolute rankings of competency priority, defined to respondent Coordinators of Special Needs as "In your particular situation, the ability to do this is not evidently needed."
>
> Useful is one of four rankings of competency priority, defined to respondent coordinators as "In your situation, the ability to do this is a useful competency, but the program can be operated without significant loss if you do not use this competency."
>
> Important is one of four rankings of competency priority, defined to the respondents as "In your situation, the programs can be operated if you do not use this competency, but there will be loss in program effectiveness."
>
> Essential is one of two absolute ranks of priority that may be assigned to a competency, defined to respondents as "In your situation, the program cannot be operated with reasonable effectiveness if this competency is not used."

The priority rating scale was constructed to be ordinal, but there was no reason to suppose it to be an interval scale. The two extremes (Not Needed and Essential) were intended to be absolute, and the two intermediate ratings (Useful, Important) were defined respectively as minor and major impacts on program effectiveness. The option of Not Needed, usually not

given in scales that rate priority of competencies, was necessitated by the fact that the expert jury could not be sure that every competency applied to every Coordinator position.

The instrument was phrased so as to stress the unique situation faced by each respondent. The purpose of this approach was to enable analysis of the ratings in relation to variables of position context, program, and incumbent personal characteristics as reported on the position questionnaire.

The completed rating instrument consisted of eight pages of competency statements--six to the page--and a cover sheet of instructions. The initial order for presentation of the competency statements was determined by the assignment of random numbers. Two forms of the rating were prepared: one with the competency statements in the order given in thie report and one with the order or presentation reversed. Within each form, the order of pages was randomized, with a separate collation for each respondent. Both the reversal of statement order and the randomization of pages were designed to minimize serial effects upon the ratings.

Validity of Reliability of Instruments

Both validity and reliability deal with the rational credence that can be placed in the data developed by an instrument. However, reliability could not be checked directly. Since the respondents were each reporting unique positions (thus ruling out interrater reliability), no means for testing internal consistency could be found and test-retest reliability would have required evidence of stability over time in a position that was inherently in flux.

As to validity, the instrument was determined by the expert jury to have face or content validity of a satisfactory order. Further, as will be seen, the ratings follow a pattern which indicates that the expert jury and the majority of incumbent Coordinators agreed that almost every statement

represented a competency that was more important than not. Thus, the jury and the incumbents provided a certain amount of external validation to each other.

Validity and reliability, therefore, were not quantified, but were judged to be adequate for this initial stage of a research and development program.

Procedures

The Coordinators had responded to a previous questionnaire for the description of their positions. A response had been received from each of the 33 Coordinators.

Approximately three weeks after the position questionnaire was distributed, the competency ratings were sent to the same Coordinators together with a letter soliciting cooperation. One week later, a follow-up letter was sent, accompanied by a tally of the data from the position questionnaire which was available at that time.

With certain exceptiona, the responses to the rating were received promptly. One exception was due to the fact that one Coordinator was undergoing the restructuring of his job and wished to complete that negotiation before rating the competencies required in his position. With that exception, all responses were received within three weeks. Telephone calls were made to those Coordinators who had not responded within one week, at which time their reactions to the rating were discussed. No Coordinator reported difficulty in completing the ratings except that one made a notation on the form that a question was poorly worded.

The result of this activity was the completion of the competency rating by 100 percent of the population under study, with one competency left unrated by each of two respondents.

Findings

The priority ratings made of the competencies by the Coordinators were tabulated with the results shown in the table that follows. The performance referents of the competencies are listed and numbered in the table in the order in which they appeared in Form One of the competency rating instrument.

As the most common general pattern, the ratings were negatively skewed. That is, most of the ratings were at the priority level of Important or Essential. The Coordinators thereby stated that, in their situations, the competencies were usually important enough so that their programs would at least be significantly impaired if the competencies were not exercised.

On the other hand, for each of 39 competency statements, at least one Coordinator reported the competency to be Not Needed at all in his situation. Only five competencies had no Coordinator ratings of Not Needed. One competency was reported to be Not Needed by 19 coordinators. (That competency was for the coordination of student transportation "with component school districts," and many Coordinators had no component districts.) Only two other competencies--securing financial aid for individual students and assisting employers with affirmative action or with wage certificates--were rated as Not Needed by as many as seven Coordinators.

Two other competencies were rated with negative skew, with the modal rating being the relatively low Useful. They were for the design of a vocational evaluation system and for preparing students for post school use of community service resources.

The most frequently used of the four choices of response was Essential.

Table 1

Ratings of Competencies as Reported by the 33 Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota, Tallied by Number of Coordinators Giving Each of Four Ratings for Each Competency (Items 28 and 44 each rated by 32 coordinators)

Competencies "IN MY SITUATION, THE COORDINATOR OF SPECIAL NEEDS MUST BE ABLE TO	Ratings[a] NotN	Usef	Impt	Esse
1. ...evaluate the performance of Special Needs staff members and recommend their retention or separation.	1	3	12	17
2. ...maintain a current knowledge of research, trends, and new developments in Special Needs programming.	1	4	17	11
3. ...maintain a record system for the Special Needs program which is consistent with state regulations and format.	0	7	9	17
4. ...provide and/or secure inservice training regarding special needs, for Special Needs and regular vocational staff.	0	3	14	16
5. ...lead a multidisciplinary team meeting regarding a student with special needs.	4	5	14	10
6. ...communicate with district board(s) so that the Special Needs program is effectively understood and its purposes integrated into those of the school(s).	3	4	12	14
7. ...interview, and recommend for employment by the district, Special Needs personnel.	3	6	13	11
8. ...authorize purchases and expenditures in accordance with standard educational bookkeeping practices and in conformity with the state Department of Education's Administrative Manual.	5	6	11	11
9. ...design a system for vocational evaluation of students, using real or simulated work as the medium.	5	11	9	8

[a]Rating abbreviations: NotN = Not Needed; Usef = Useful; Impt = Important; Esse = Essential.

Table 1 (continued)

Competencies "IN MY SITUATION, THE COORDINATOR OF SPECIAL NEEDS MUST BE ABLE TO	Ratings[a] NotN	Usef	Impt	Esse
10. ...assist vocational instructors to modify their programs to meet the needs of handicapped and disadvantaged students.	3	5	8	17
11. ...develop an individualized prescriptive program plan with an individual student who has special needs.	2	3	14	14
12. ...integrate the Special Needs program into the comprehensive vocational and other agency services of the community.	0	6	12	15
13. ...effectively organize and use advisory committees.	3	4	11	15
14. ...establish formal communication channels among units within the district, and/or among component districts, regarding the operation of the Special Needs program.	0	6	12	15
15. ...acquire funding from a variety of sources to support the Special Needs program.	4	8	8	13
16. ...establish effective means for communication and dissemination of information within the Special Needs staff.	1	1	14	17
17. ...assist students with special needs to solve problems in interpersonal relations with peers, teachers and family.	3	6	12	12
18. ...specify role descriptions and qualifications for Special Needs positions and personnel.	1	7	14	11
19. ...use styles of leadership appropriate to different situations in relation to delegation of authority, accountability and supervision.	3	4	7	19

[a]Rating abbreviations: NotN = Not Needed; Usef = Useful; Impt = Important; Esse = Essential.

Table 1 (continued)

Competencies "IN MY SITUATION, THE COORDINATOR OF SPECIAL NEEDS MUST BE ABLE TO	Ratings[a] NotN	Usef	Impt	Esse
20. ...design and implement a program evaluation process to monitor the operations of the Special Needs program.	0	4	13	16
21. ...select and acquire instructional materials that are appropriate for use by students with special needs.	1	7	11	14
22. ...design and implement a process that will identify students who may have special needs, and will determine their eligibility for Special Needs services.	2	3	8	20
23. ...develop, and integrate into district policy, Special Needs policies that are consistent with state and local requirements and with the rights of students with special needs.	2	4	12	15
24. ...insure that legally acceptable due process is followed in district actions that affect students with special needs.	4	8	13	8
25. ...make a determination of the nature of a student's needs and potentials, using referral information, interview, and measuring instruments for the assessment of the student's vocational interests, aptitudes and potentials, and learning characteristics.	2	7	9	15
26. ...mediate conflict within the staff.	5	6	11	11
27. ...plan specific modifications in vocational curriculum and methods to make them appropriate for students with special needs.	3	5	14	11
28. ...interpret and implement at the local level the guidelines and philosophy of the state Plan and of the state Unit for Special Needs, consistent with the accepted philosophy and practices of vocational education.	1	6	13	12

[a]Rating abbreviations: NotN = Not Needed; Usef = Useful; Impt = Important; Esse = Essential.

Table 1 (continued)

Competencies "IN MY SITUATION, THE COORDINATOR OF SPECIAL NEEDS MUST BE ABLE TO	Ratings[a] NotN	Usef	Impt	Esse
29. ...carry out effective public relations with various audiences on behalf of the Special Needs program, using both oral and written formats.	1	6	9	17
30. ...assist a student with special needs to take an active part in the planning of his educational placement and vocational program.	1	7	12	13
31. ...supervise the activities of Special Needs professional personnel.	1	2	11	19
32. ...coordinate student transportation with component school districts.	19	9	3	2
33. ...design and conduct a follow-up study of students with special needs.	3	5	12	9
34. ...provide vocational counseling and guidance to students with special needs.	3	5	7	18
35. ...design a student evaluation that will indicate student progress in a vocational program.	4	6	14	9
36. ...identify, plan, and recommend facility (physical plant) requirements of the Special Needs program within the district.	2	9	15	7
37. ...secure financial aid for individual students, using alternative sources.	7	6	10	10
38. ...comply with state and federal laws, regulations, and guidelines, interpreting them and reporting so as to show that all criteria are met for Special Needs program approval and funding.	4	4	9	16
39. ...design and implement a formal needs assessment process to determine the necessary size and type of Special Needs program.	3	5	12	13

[a]Rating abbreviations: NotN = Not Needed; Usef = Useful; Impt = Important; Esse = Essential.

Table 1 (continued)

Competencies "IN MY SITUATION, THE COORDINATOR OF SPECIAL NEEDS MUST BE ABLE TO	Ratings[a] NotN	Usef	Impt	Esse
40. ...develop and maintain a Special Needs budget that apppropriately accounts for funds from several sources.	2	4	11	16
41. ...prepare students with special needs to effectively use community resources and agencies to meet their long term needs after they leave the school.	2	11	10	10
42. ...assist an employer in developing an affirmative action plan for employment of handicapped persons, and/or in securing a Wages and Hours certificate for less than minimum wage.	9	14	7	3
43. ...provide remedial and developmental instruction in basic skills, such as reading and math, to students with special needs.	4	7	8	14
44. ...apply basic learning theory and principles of behavior management to the design of instructional programs for individual students with special needs.	1	5	14	12

[a]Rating abbreviations: NotN = Not Needed; Usef = Useful; Impt = Important; Esse = Essential.

Position Contingencies

One of the purposes of the competency rating was to determine whether the Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota were incumbent to a single job (a group of positions involving essentially the same duties, skills, knowledged, and responsibilities) or whether they could be differentiated into groups with the members of each group incumbent to a job that could be distinguished from that of other Coordinators. To test this, 17 competencies were chosen where the ratings could be divided 16 to 17, or 15 to 18, on the rating scale. A total of 17 competencies met that criteria. Seven variables

from the position questionnaire were likewise selected, choosing those that might plausibly identify different groups of Coordinators and those position characteristics where there were enough respondents in each category to make a statistical test possible. Some of the plausible characteristics had to do with program size or type of student served, and others had to do with the background and experience of the Coordinator.

All combinations of the 17 competency statements and 7 position variables were tested to see whether they were related to each other. Out of the 119 tests, only four were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level. Taken as whole, this means that the ratings did not segregate the Coordinators into reasonably discriminable subgroups. Consequently, the job of Coordinator of Special Needs can be considered to be a single job in Minnesota even though it is carried out in dissimilar settings by dissimilar people. At this stage in the research and development program, the competency requirements can be considered similar across all of the special Needs coordination jobs.

Implications

Most of the implications of these findings derived directly from inspection of the competency ratings reported by the incumbents. In deriving these implications, some references needs to be made to collateral data such as educational laws and regulations and to the limited amount that is known about the technology of special needs services in vocational education.

Representatives of Competencies

The competencies reportedly needed by the Coordinators cannot be considered to be an exhaustive list. However, the 44 discrete competencies were developed by a jury of experts and were reported by the incumbents to be substantially required by the job. The individual Coordinators varied in their reported needs for specific competencies; for most competencies the

proportion of Coordinators who considered the competency to be Essential ranged from one-third to two-thirds. However, there were only four competencies that failed to have at least one Coordinator term it as Not Needed at all.

The implication of this degree of agreement is that the 44 competencies constitute a minimum list of what is required in most of the Coordinator positions.

Diversity

Even though the majority of Coordinators of Special Needs claimed most competencies to be at least Important, the pattern of ratings indicates that the Coordinators were self-reporting from diverse contexts. The job of Coordinator of Special Needs in Minnesota can be described as diverse, even though that diversity could not be related to any of the plausible characteristics of the job or of the incumbent. By extension, this fact would imply that any project activities in the future, e.g., the development of inservice training for this class of personnel, would require an individualized approach.

Leadership Functions

An inspection of the content of the competency statements together with the importance assigned to them by the respondents leads to the conclusion that a significant part of the job is administrative in function.

The Coordinators of Special Needs reported that it was usually at least Important if not Essential for them to be competent in activities that relate to program design, supervision of program operation and personnel, responsibility for reporting about the special needs program, and responsibility for mobilizing financial support for the program. This kind of activity can be distinguished from the nonadministrative activities that entail direct service to individual students.

At the very least it will be seen that Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota are required to exercise leadership in their positions.

Contradictory Ratings

Some of the ratings given by individual Coordinators are somewhat contradictory to the job description as stated in the state Plan. For example, less than one-half of the Coordinators reported that is was Essential for them to provide and/or secure inservice training for special needs and regular vocational staff, although the state Plan specifies this as one of the Coordinator responsibilities. Seven Coordinators reported that their programs would not be impaired if they did not maintain a record system for a special needs program which is consistent with the state regulations and format.

Nearly one-half of the new Coordinators did not consider it Essential that they be able to assist vocational instructors to modify their programs to meet the needs of handicapped and disadvantaged students; and, only one-third considered it Essential that they be able to plan specific modifications in curriculum and methods to make them appropriate for students with special needs. Yet, the state Plan specifies that the Coordinator of Special Needs should provide the necessary support services to students with special needs where deemed appropriate and prepare and implement a delivery system which addresses itself to fulfilling the unique needs of students.

Some of the ratings indicate that Coordinators in specific, and perhaps vocational education in general, has not yet felt the impact of certain developments in the field of education. For example, only one-fourth of the Coordinators rated as Essential the competency to insure that legally acceptable due process is followed in district actions that affect students with special needs.

Some of these ratings which contradict other evidence may be due to the fact that two-thirds of the Coordinators began their jobs within the past two years and one-third of them had had less than one full year of experience at the time they made the ratings.

Summary

In summary of the competency ratings, it can be said that their performance referents constitute a description of the job of Coordinator of Special Needs in Minnesota as perceived by the incumbents. The job is not clearly defined or perhaps not uniform or (most likely) both. However, it does seem to entail a certain amount of educational leadership, both technological and administrative, as well as a certain amount of direct service. The balance seems to vary widely, in ways that can best be described by direct inspection of the entabled data.

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APPENDIX A

COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF COORDINATORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA AS PERCEIVED BY INCUMBENTS

(Summary)

This summarizes the procedures and findings of an investigation conducted by the Department of Educational Administration, University of Minnesota, and supported in part by the U.S. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, An Empirical Role Definition of Local Special Needs Personnel in Vocational Education.

BACKGROUND

This study was carried out as part of a programmatic research and development effort. That effort is the development of inservice training for persons who at the local educational agency level are responsible for programs of vocational education for handicapped and disadvantaged students. In Minnesota, this job is designated as Coordinator of Special Needs.

The Department of Educational Administration conducts inservice training for directors of special education. The present investigation was suggested by some of the developments in that program. Other activities have included a survey of special needs personnel in the various state divisions of vocational education and a survey of local special needs programs in the various states.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the present investigation was to delineate the nature of the job of Coordinator of Special Needs in Minnesota, and to determine what competencies are perceived by the incumbents to be required by that job.

The study investigated the following:

1. Characteristics of the organizational context of the job, nature of the program supervised, and background and professional orientation of the incumbents.

2. Competencies required on the job as perceived by the incumbents, and,

3. Whether, in their perceptions of their competency requirements, the Minnesota Coordinators of Special Needs constitute an indistinguishable single population or whether they are made up of distinguishable subpopulations.

Available information indicated that the job would be diverse and that the incumbents would be varied in background and orientation.

RELATED INFORMATION

Special Needs programming in vocational education (service to students who are handicapped and/or disadvantaged) has attained high visibility, and

its lead personnel are the subject of considerable interest. The job of Coordinator of Special Needs, to which is allocated the responsibility of special needs programs at the local level, has emerged as pivotal in the enterprise. The job is defined in general terms in the Minnesota State Plan for vocational education, but neither in Minnesota nor elsewhere was there found a statement of what competencies are required by the job.

The competencies of educational personnel have likewise become the subjects of extensive literature. The competency based movement is relatively recent, with most of its literature appearing in the 1970's. The competencies approach has become the most common one in the design of new training programs for educational personnel.

A state by state search has not revealed the existence of a preservice or inservice training program designed for Coordinators of Special Needs. Rate of entry into the job appears to be rapid and the incumbents appear to have been variously recruited. The specific facts regarding this, however, had not been previously ascertained.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Population The population studied consisted of all 33 present Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota.

Competency statements A jury of experts was assembled to generate competency statements. The jury consisted of: the state Coordinator of Vocational Special Needs Programs; the state Coordinator of Vocational Programs for the Handicapped; a University of Minnesota professor of vocational education; the president of the state association of special needs personnel, the secretary of the association, and another local special needs coordinator; a University of Minnesota professor of educational administration; the director of a private rehabilitation facility; and a consultant engaged in developing a statewide information system for special needs. The jury members individually submitted competency statements and then met for a full day and an additional half-day to refine and collate the statements. The result was a list of 44 competency statements.

Position description A questionnaire was developed for generating information about the organizational context, the program characteristics, and the coordinator preparation and orientation. This questionnaire was submitted to the 33 coordinators in Minnesota, with 100% return.

Competency rating The 44 competency statements were presented to the Coordinators with the request to check each competency as being either Not Needed, Useful, Important, or Essential to the conduct of the job. Returns were received from every coordinator.

Analysis The returns were statistically checked for patterns that might indicate reliability of the instruments. The characteristics as revealed on the position questionnaire and the ratings of the competencies were tabulated. Finally, 17 competencies were checked against 7 characteristics of the positions and of the incumbents to determine whether the competency ratings were those of a single population or of distinguishable subpopulations.

FINDINGS

Instrument reliability To the limited extent that verification was possible, the instruments appeared to be operating with reasonable reliability.

Organizational variables Geographic location was found to be roughly proportionate among central city, urban/rural, and rural. Most incumbents were found in Area Vocational-Technical Institutes operated by single school districts, and most were under the immediate direction of the school director. Most of the incumbents had job titles similar to that of coordinator and over two-thirds of the jobs had been established within the past two calendar years.

Program variables Most programs were neither completely integrated nor completely segregated. In size they ranged from ten to more than 300 students. Age levels served ranged from junior high to adults over age 21. Types of student need were reported equivocally. The coordinators reported supervising personnel ranging in number from zero (five programs) to over 20 (six programs).

Incumbent variables Most of the incumbents reported academic degrees of Masters level or beyond. Most of them had had at least 9 quarter credits of training in general education, vocational trade and industrial education, special education, and educational administration. Most had been employed in vocational education in the past. Most of them had taught in general education and over a third of them had taught in special education. Nearly two-thirds were members of the American Vocational Association and more than half were members of the National Association of Vocational Eduation Special Needs Personnel.

Competency ratings Most of the 44 competencies were rated by the Coordinators as being at least Important if not Essential. On the other hand, at least one coordinator reported each of 39 competencies to be not needed at all in his situation; only five competencies had no ratings of Not Needed. The most common rating of the competencies was Essential.

Contingencies A total of 17 competencies were selected to be matched against 7 variables from the position questionnaire. The proposition to be tested was that variables on the position questionnaire could be used to divide the responding population into groups who would rate the competencies differently. Of the 119 comparison, 4 were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level. This finding does not allow a practical division of the population into groups; for practical purposes, they may be considered as a single, but diverse, population.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reliability of information The information in general was considered to be adequately reliable for this early stage in the development of a training program.

Population unity Useful subpopulations among Minnesota Coordinators of Special Needs were not discriminated by this study. The population is best treated as unitary and the positions are best considered to be variants of the same job. Within that same job, there is much diversity and training approaches should be individualized.

Competency patterns Perceptions of competency needs lacked unanimity; however, the clear majority of coordinators considered most competencies on the list to be at least Important. The conclusion is that the expert jury was successful in generating competency statements that were reasonably compatible with the job of coordinator. Some of the ratings lead to the conclusion that some of the coordinators are not yet familiar with all of the requirements of their jobs.

The job The job of Coordinator of Special Needs is emergent and not yet fully defined. It consists of a new general class of personnel in vocational education, the first middle managers who are not trade-specific. The job has multidisciplinary affinities, with roots in at least vocational education, special education, and vocational rehabilitation, as was evident in the competency ratings and in the incumbents' backgrounds.

Recommendations to the field It is recommended that the state education agency and the incumbent coordinators engage in continued clarification of the nature of the coordinator job. The diversity of program and job context should not be unnecessarily discouraged. Neither should there be suppression of the diversity in incumbent background and orientation at this stage in the field's development.

Recommendations for training The general research and development plan of which this study was an early segment was confirmed in its immediate succeeding stages:

1. It is recommended that there be developed an individualized, modular, competency based inservice training program for Coordinators of Special Needs.

2. It is recommended that investigation be made of the applicability of this study's findings and recommendations to other states.

3. Since the position is in many respects analogous to that of the director of special education, consideration should be given to using the already developed training program for special education directors where applicable.

4. It is recommended that a determination be made of actual competency requirements of the job as well as the presently reported incumbent perceptions of competency need.

5. Finally, the competency list used in this study is affirmed to be an appropriate one and is recommended for further refinement, such as the division into administrative and service competencies and a free sort to develop a taxonomy of competencies.

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